

R. Wes Hayes, Jr.
Chairman

Rusty L. Monhollon, Ph.D.
President & Executive Director

Agenda Item 7.02.E.
CHE Meeting



February 22, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairman Wes Hayes, and Members, SC Commission on Higher Education

FROM: Chairman Charles Munns, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

Annual Report on the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) and South Carolina Activities

Background

This annual report provides information on the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) and related South Carolina activities, including the 2019 NC-SARA Data Report.

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is a voluntary, interstate reciprocity agreement that establishes comparable standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education¹. Its member states and U.S. territories recognize each other's participating institutions as eligible to enroll students in distance education programs. SARA membership provides better access for students to enroll in courses and programs of good quality.

In March 2016, adoption of SC Code of Laws 1976, as amended authorized the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (Commission) to seek membership in interstate post-secondary distance education through SARA or similar auspices on behalf of the state of South Carolina. South Carolina joined SARA in June 2016 and renews its membership every two years. The Commission began accepting institutional applications to participate in SARA on July 1, 2016.

The structure of SARA is based on a model established collaboratively among officials from the four U.S. regional education compacts, state authorization agencies, and institutions. NC-SARA facilitates state approvals through the regional education compacts (for South Carolina, Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)), which approve state membership, and requires application by an identified state entity (in South Carolina's case, the Commission). The SREB-SARA Steering Committee reviews and approves initial and renewal applications for state membership². Afterwards, NC-SARA recognizes the approval from SREB-SARA.

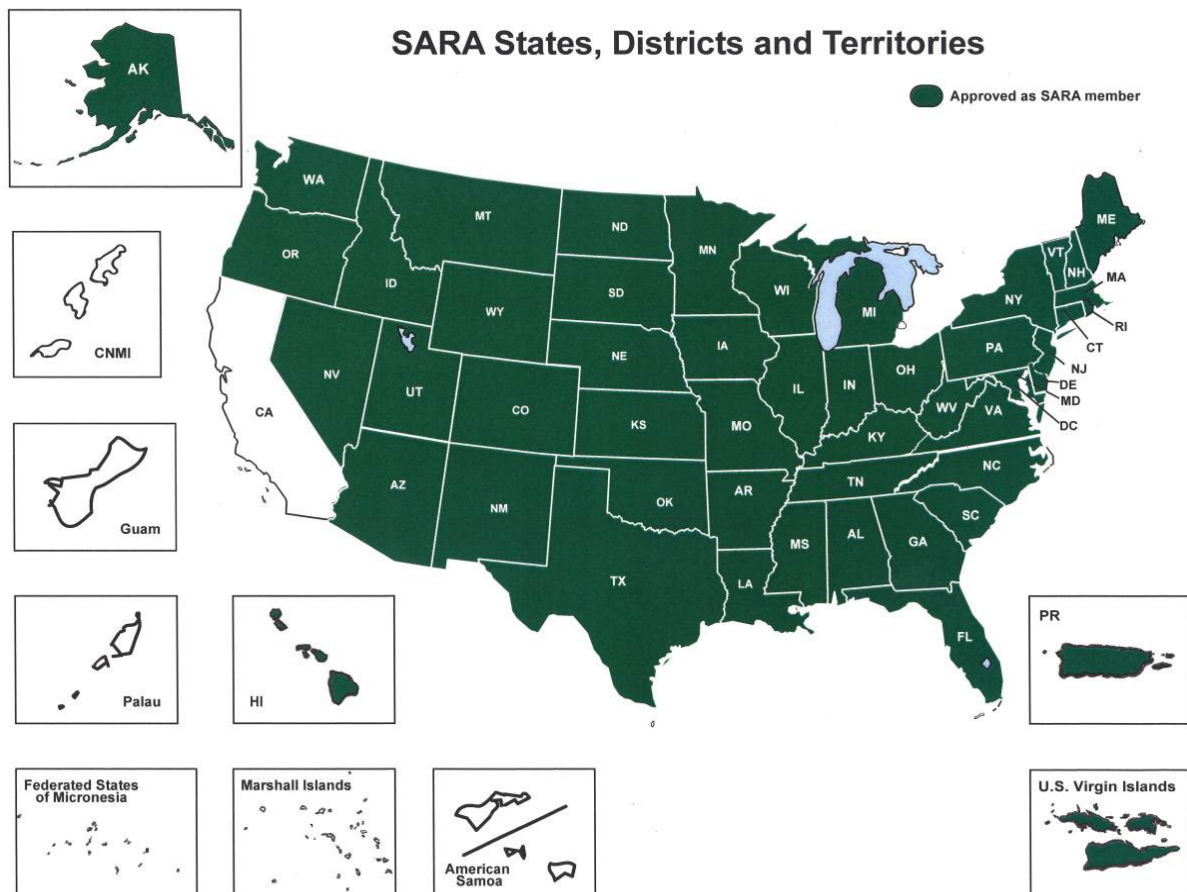
¹ NC-SARA uses the U.S. Department of Education's definition of distance education:
<https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/VisGlossaryPopup.aspx?idlink=713>

² Renewals are reviewed every other year.

SARA participating institutions are required to report their distance education enrollments during the annual data reporting period, in accordance with NC-SARA policies³. The NC-SARA data reporting period requires all institutions to report their distance education enrollment data as submitted to the federal government in the Fall Enrollment (EF) component of their submissions to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The 2019 NC-SARA Data Report summarizes institutional reporting for distance education enrollment for all SARA participating institutions during the fall of 2018. In addition, during the 2019 data reporting period, NC-SARA required all institutions to report in-state distance education enrollment, and out-of-state learning placements (OOSLP) for the first time.

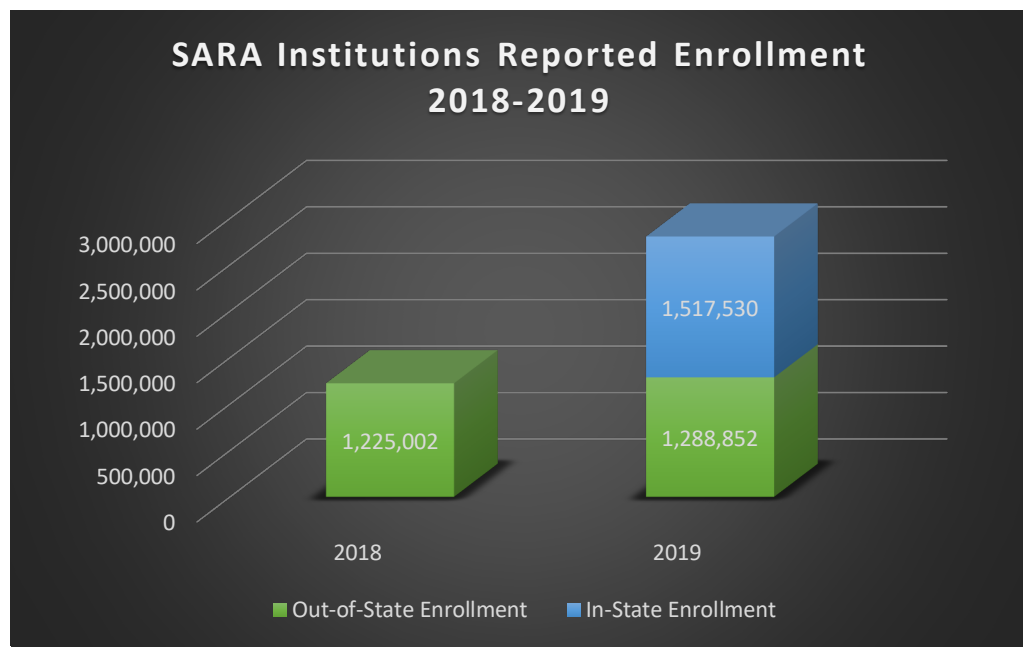
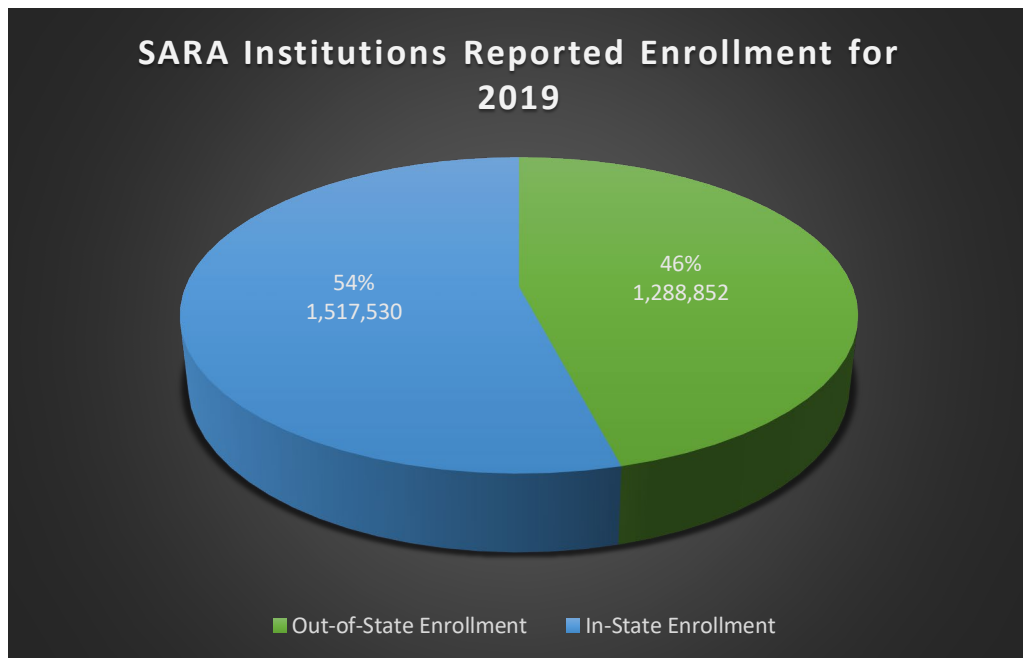
NC-SARA Activities

The 2019 NC-SARA Data Report showed that 1,969 institutions in 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are participating in SARA, an increase of 9.2% since 2018. In 2019 the total reported SARA out-of-state distance education enrollment was 1,288,852, an increase of 5.2% from 1,225,002 reported in 2018. For the first time, in 2019 institutions were required to report in-state distance education enrollment to NC-SARA. In 2019 the total reported SARA in-state distance education enrollment was 1,517,530, bringing the total distance education enrollment for SARA institutions in 2019 to 2,806,382. The following graphic provided by NC-SARA shows participating states and territories in green.



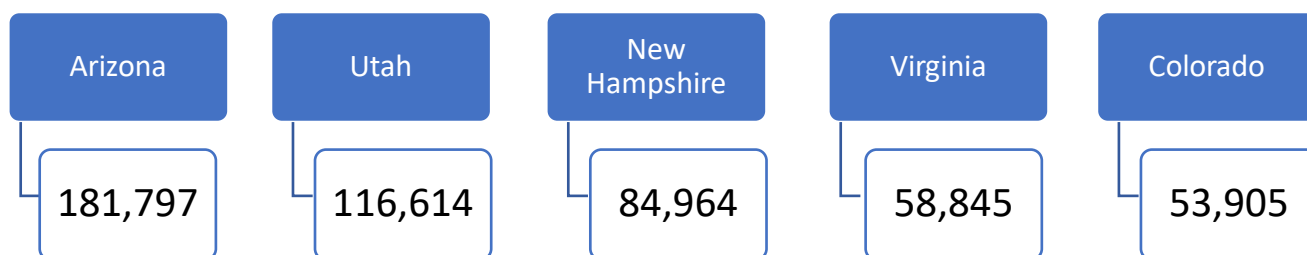
³ The NC-SARA data reporting period opens from April to June annually.

The 2019 NC-SARA Data Report shows that in-state enrollment represents over half of the total reported enrollment; therefore, the addition of in-state enrollment reporting is a major factor in the large increase in total enrollment since 2018. The following charts show the reported enrollment for 2019 and the enrollment from 2018-2019.

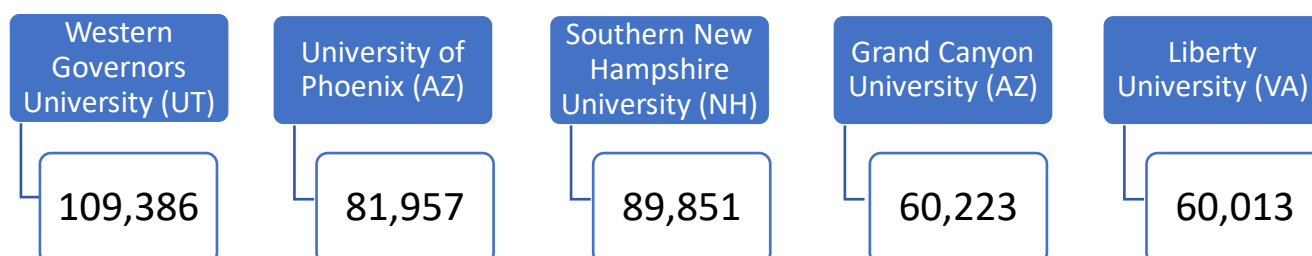


The following graphics show the top five states with the highest SARA out-of-state enrollment and the number of students enrolled in that state, and the top five institutions with the highest SARA out-of-state enrollment and the number of students enrolled in that institution.

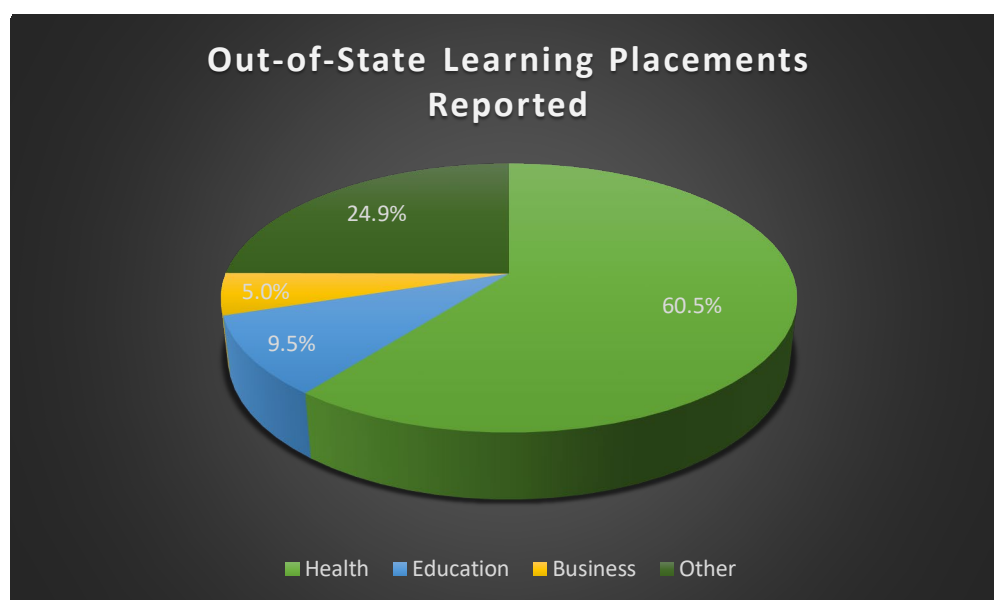
Top Five States with Highest SARA Out-of-State Enrollment in 2019



Top Five Institutions with Highest SARA Out-of-State Enrollment in 2019

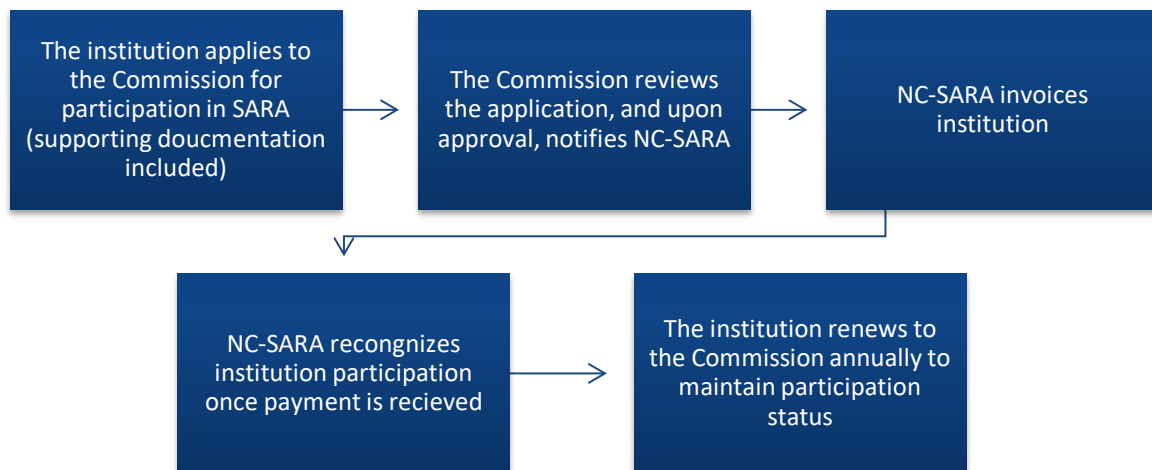


NC-SARA required all institutions to report their Out-of-State Learning Placements (OOSLP) during the 2019 reporting period for the first time. OOSLP reporting included on-the-ground, out-of-state learning placement, both for online and campus-based students. In 2019 a total of 239,955 OOSLP were reported. Institutions reported OOSLP using the 47 two-digit CIP codes representing program areas. In 2019, the largest reported OOSLP were health professions and related programs, with 145,225 placements. The following chart provided by NC-SARA shows the OOSLP enrollment reported in 2019.



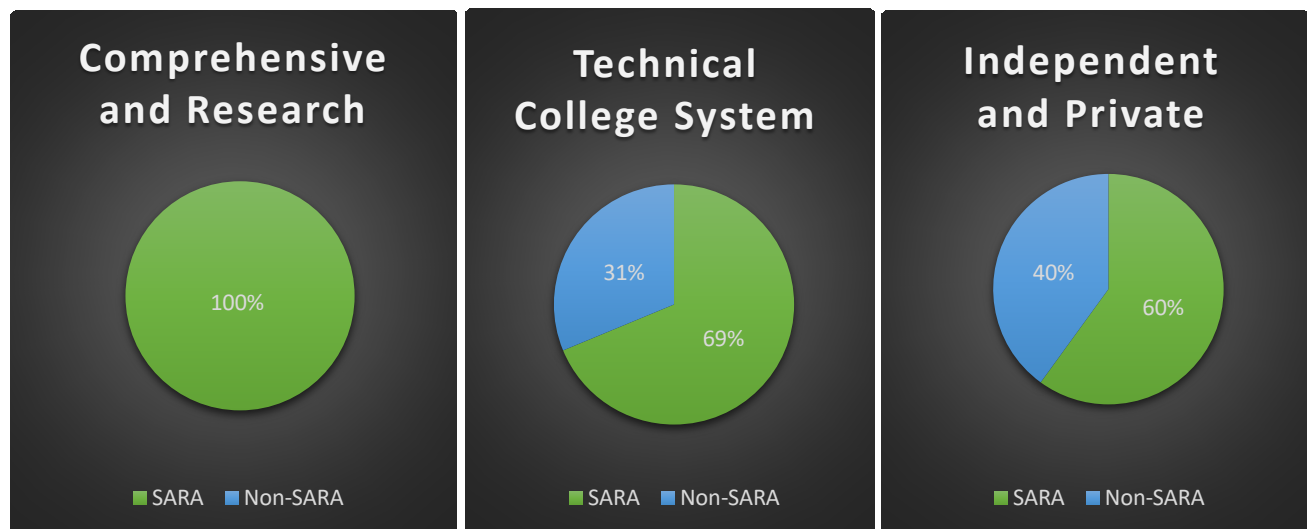
South Carolina SARA Activities

The process to approve South Carolina institutions to participate in SARA is as follows:



South Carolina Institutions Participating in SARA

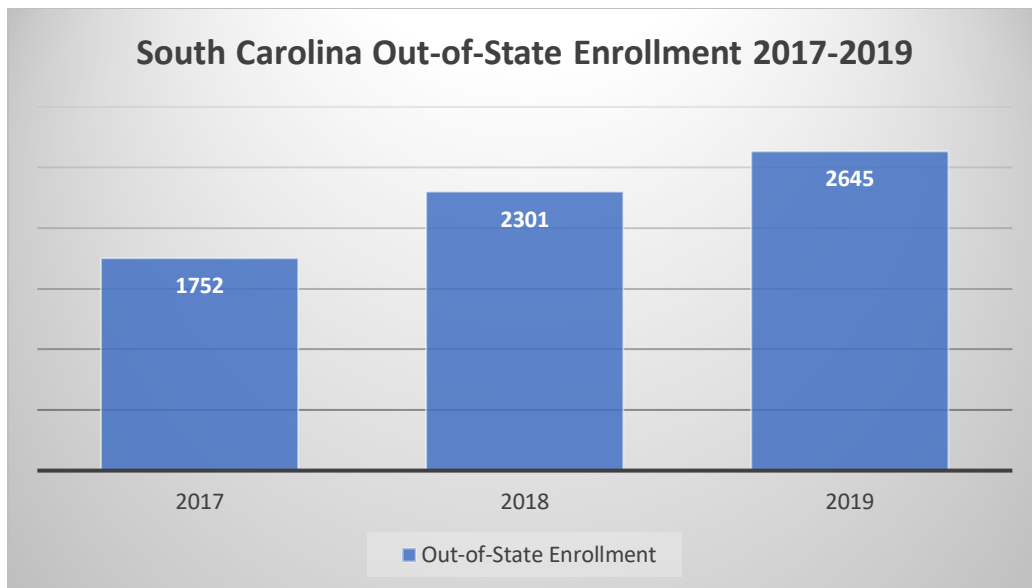
Since its inception as a SARA member state in June 2016, 40 of 54 (74%) eligible South Carolina institutions have joined SARA, including 13 of 13 (100%) from the Comprehensive and Research sector, 11 of 16 (69%) from the Technical College System, and 15 of 25 (60%) from the Independent and Private sector. The following charts show the participation among South Carolina institutions in SARA by sector.



Out-of-State Students Enrolled at South Carolina Institutions Participating In SARA

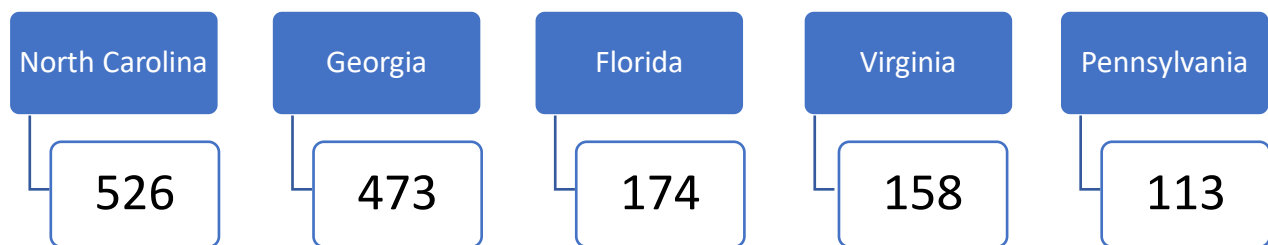
During the 2019 data reporting period, a total of 2,645 out-of-state students from SARA member states were enrolled at 37 South Carolina SARA participating institutions⁴. Overall, out-of-state students enrolled in South Carolina institutions through SARA has increased 50% since 2017. The following chart shows the trend in out-of-state enrollment since 2017.

⁴ Three South Carolina institutions became SARA members after the 2019 reporting period ended.

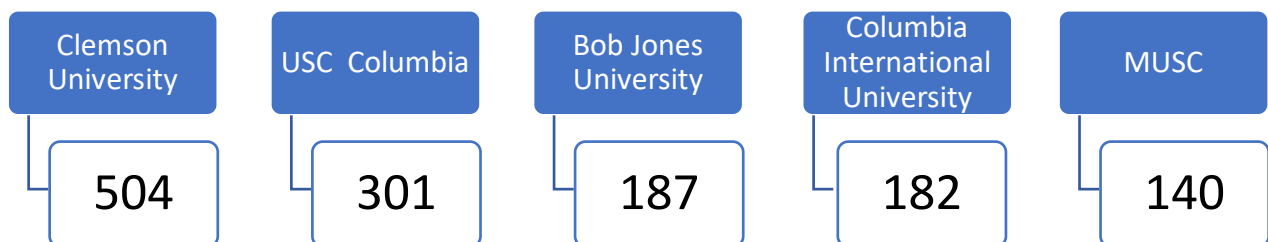


The top five SARA member states from which South Carolina institutions enrolled students through SARA in 2019 represent 55% of the overall out-of-state enrollment. The following graphics shows the top five SARA member states and the number of students enrolled from each state, along with the top five South Carolina institutions with the highest out-of-state enrollment and number of students enrolled.

Top Five SARA States with Highest Out-of-State Enrollment in South Carolina



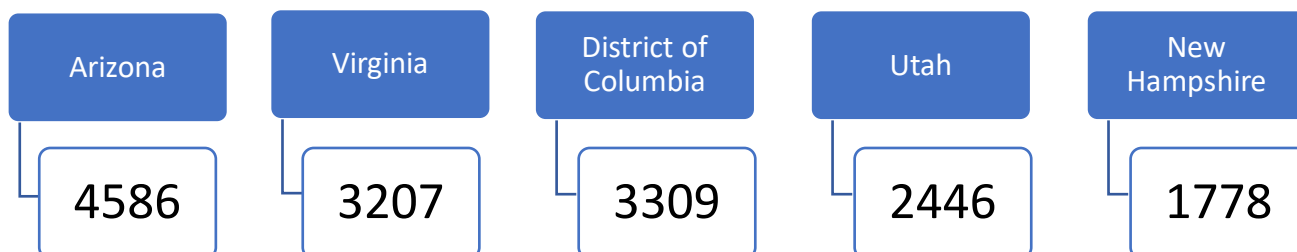
Top Five South Carolina SARA Institutions with Highest Out-of-State Enrollment



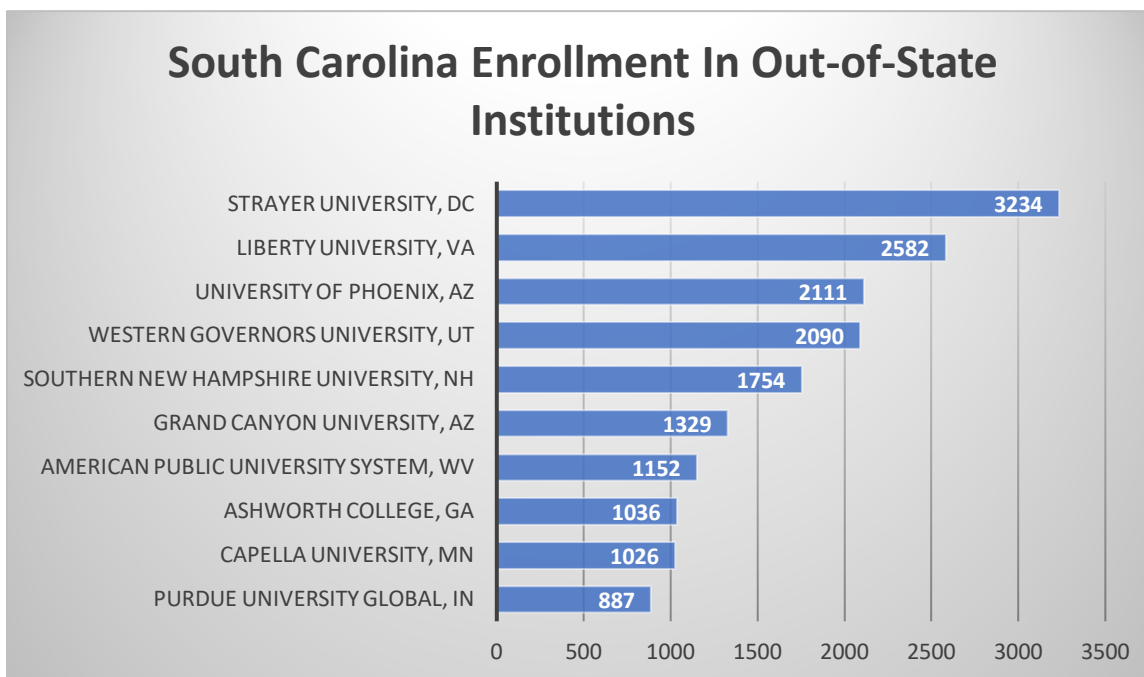
South Carolina Residents Participating in Distance Education in Other SARA Member States

During the 2019 enrollment data reporting period, 31,835 South Carolina residents enrolled in an out-of-state SARA participating institution. The following chart shows the top five destination states for South Carolina (including the District of Columbia).

Top Five Destination States for South Carolina Residents



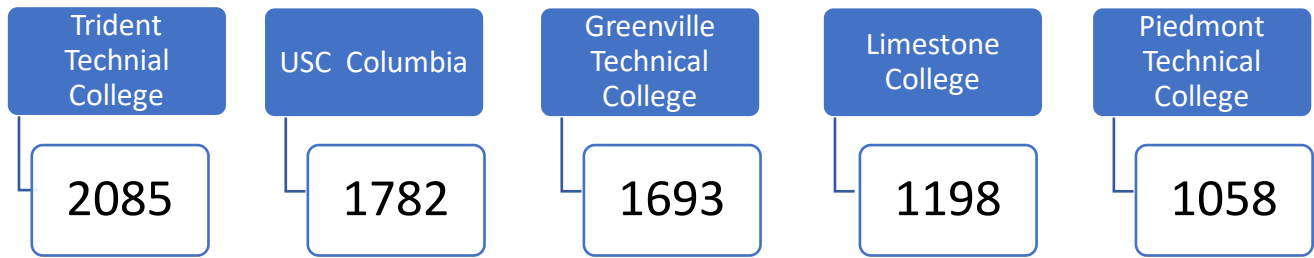
The chart below shows the top 10 out-of-state colleges or universities in which South Carolina residents enrolled; enrollment in these institutions accounts for 54% of the 31,835 South Carolina residents (17,201) enrolled in distance education in an out-of-state SARA-participating institution.



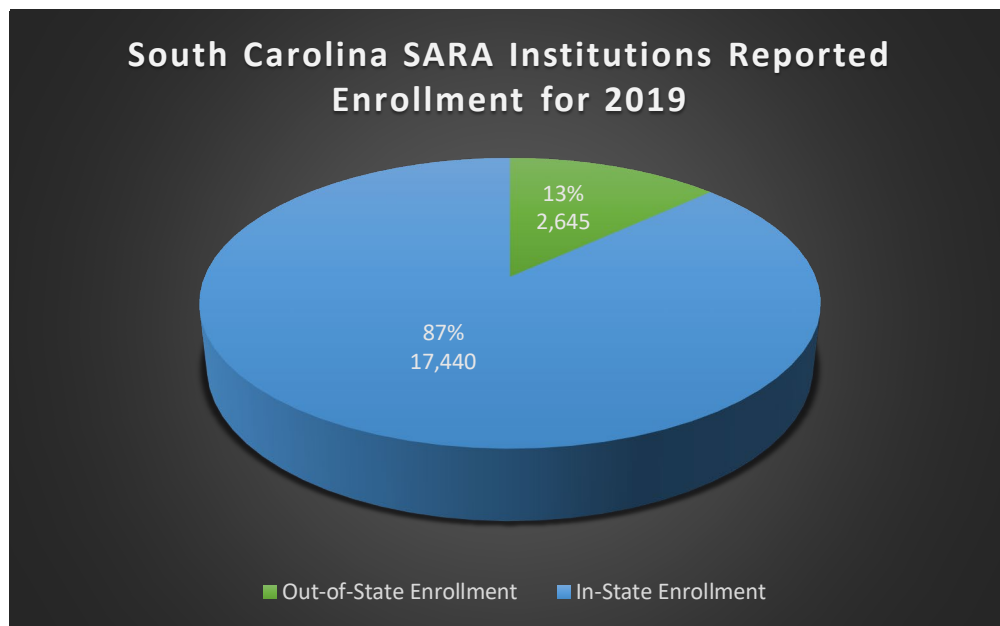
In-State Student Enrollment at South Carolina Institutions Participating In SARA

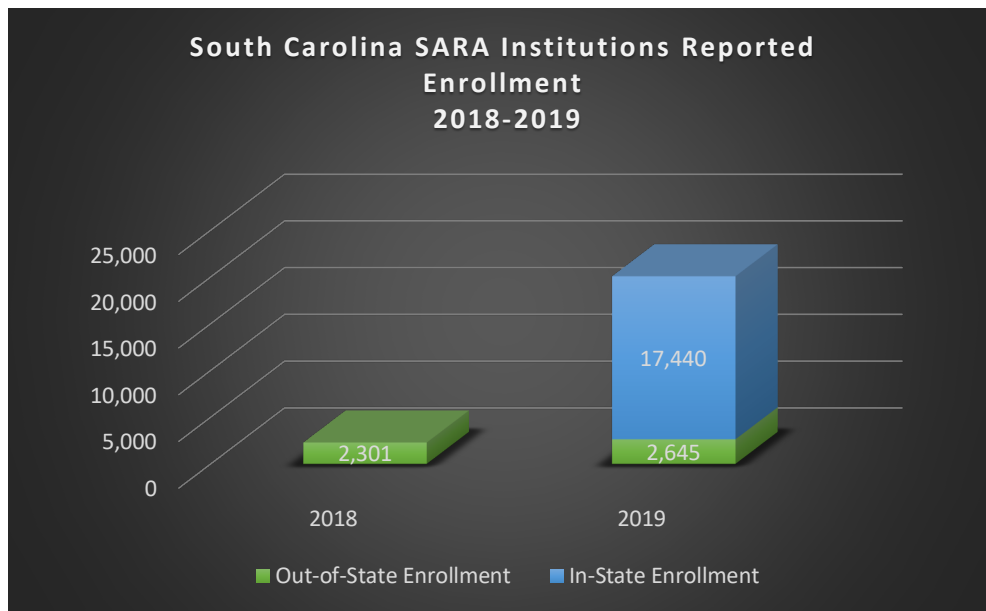
For the first time in 2019, all South Carolina institutions participating in SARA reported their in-state distance education enrollment during the NC-SARA data reporting period. In 2019, South Carolina institutions reported a total of 17,440 South Carolina students enrolled in distance education. This brings the total SARA student enrollment for South Carolina in 2019 to 20,085. The following graphic shows the top five South Carolina SARA institutions with the highest in-state enrollment in 2019.

Top Five South Carolina SARA Institutions with Highest In-State Enrollment

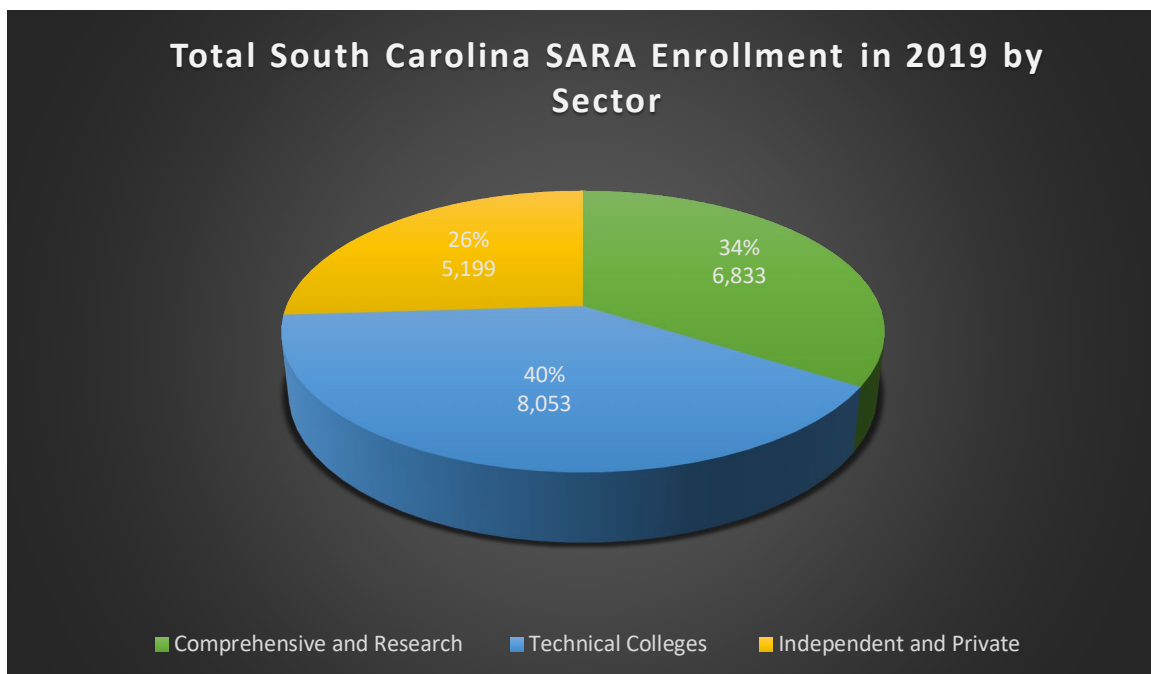


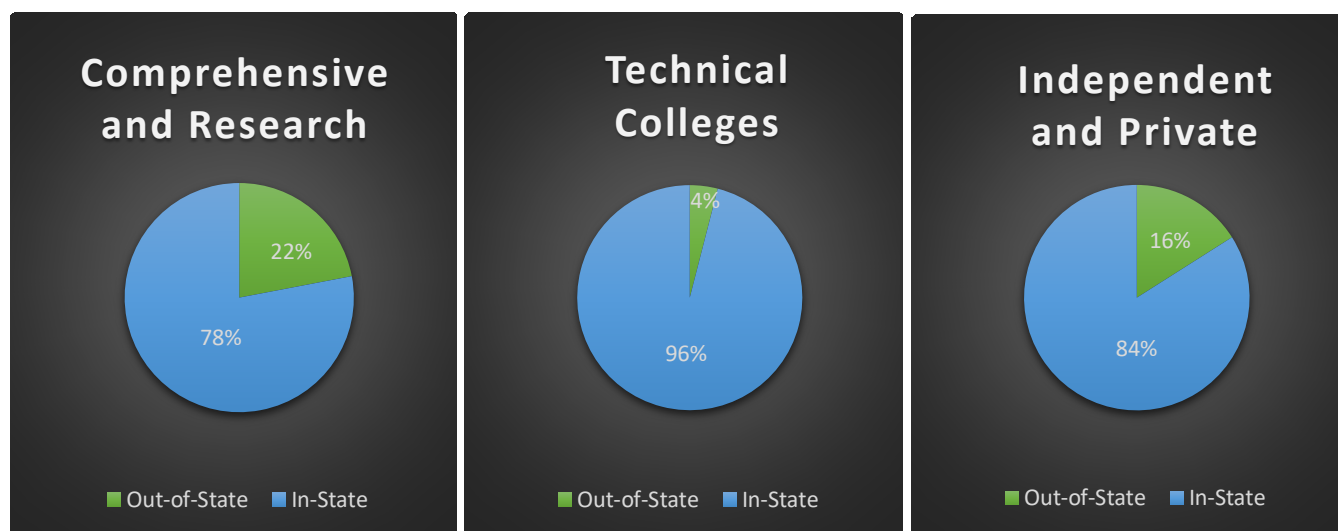
The 2019 NC-SARA Data Report shows that in-state enrollment in South Carolina represents 87% of the total reported enrollment; therefore, the addition of in-state enrollment reporting is a major factor in the large increase in total enrollment since 2018. The following charts show the reported South Carolina enrollment for 2019 and the reported South Carolina enrollment from 2018-2019.





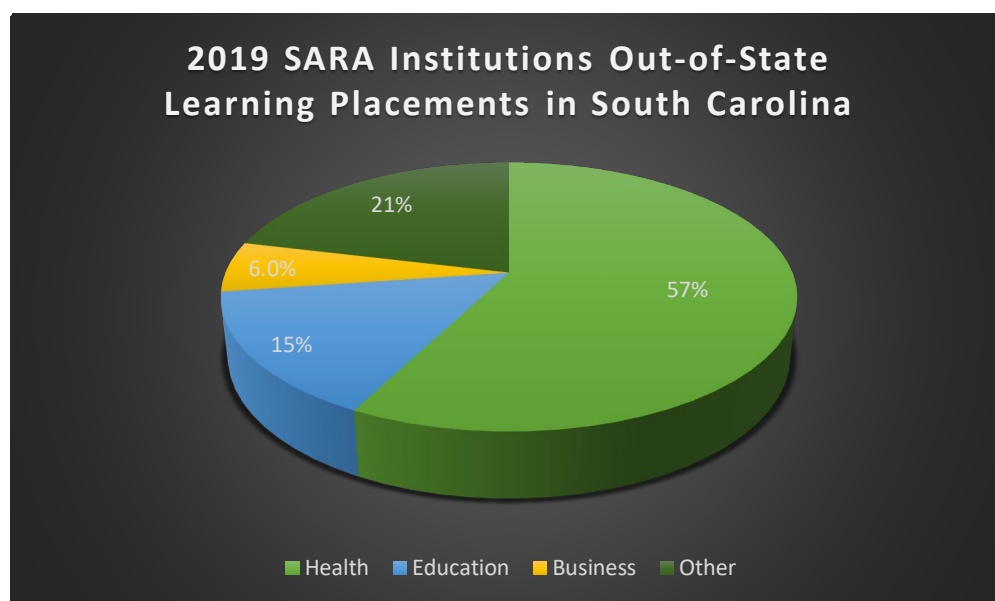
As reported, in 2019 the total SARA enrollment for South Carolina was 20,085. Of these, 6,833 students were enrolled in a comprehensive or research institution, 8,053 students were enrolled in a technical college, and 5,199 students were enrolled in an independent or private institution. The following charts show the total out-of-state and in-state SARA enrollment for South Carolina in 2019 by sector.





Out-of-State Learning Placements (OOSLP) Students at South Carolina Institutions Participating In SARA

For the first time, during the 2019 NC-SARA data reporting period, SARA institutions reported their Out-of-State Learning Placements (OOSLP). In 2019, a total of 3,100 South Carolina students were placed in Out-of-State Learning Placements (OOSLP) in SARA states. Additionally, a total of 4,669 out-of-state students were placed in an OOSLP in South Carolina in 2019. Of these, 2,668 were in Health Professions and Related Programs, 721 were in Education, and 291 were in Business. The following chart shows the 2019 SARA institutions that reported OOSLPs in South Carolina by field of study.



SARA-Related Student Complaints

As the state's portal agency for SARA, the Commission is the final authority for SARA-related student complaints against South Carolina institutions participating in SARA. The Commission is required to report quarterly to NC-SARA about any complaints received. As in 2018, during the 2019 data reporting period, the Commission received no SARA-related student complaints.

February 2021 CAAL Summary

At the February 12, 2021 CAAL meeting, Commission staff presented the report, highlighting developments and changes in out-of-state distance education enrollments for South Carolina SARA participating institutions. Committee members commented that enrollment of South Carolina residents in out-of-state programs still exceeds out-of-state enrollment into in-state institutions. Additionally, committee members inquired whether additional data is available for programs and/or sectors highly sought out-of-state by South Carolina because they are not offered in the state. Commission staff informed the Committee that NC-SARA does not have program-specific data from institutions to provide for this analysis. However, the Committee was informed that NC-SARA is in development of an online institution catalog of programs offered via distance education by SARA-participating institutions. Commission staff anticipates this catalog will offer additional insight into program offerings and provide a source by which to establish comparative analysis of in-state program offerings.

Summary

As noted in the previous annual report, the number of South Carolina students enrolled in SARA participating institutions outside of the state remains higher than the number of students in other states enrolled into South Carolina institutions through SARA. Staff continue to analyze this trend. Based on the limited information available, the reason for this trend remains unknown. However, assessment of the data and the information suggests the following:

1. The top five states with the highest SARA enrollments are home to institutions that have maintained high online course and program enrollments across many U.S. states: Utah (Western Governors University), Arizona (University of Phoenix and Grand Canyon University), New Hampshire (Southern New Hampshire University, Virginia (Liberty University), and District of Columbia (Strayer University). South Carolina is not home to institutions with such profiles.
2. No data is available about the 31,835 South Carolina residents enrolled through SARA in out-of-state institutions, including whether these students were previously enrolled prior to SARA or are new students representing an influx of new enrollees due to SARA.

The additional reporting of in-state enrollment for SARA institutions provides insight into the level of interest among South Carolina residents to pursue postsecondary education through distance education. Additionally, the inclusion of Out-of-State Learning Placements (OOSLP) in the 2019 report provides more information on the types of programs that attract students to different states to conduct experimental training.

Overall, more than half of eligible South Carolina institutions (74%) currently participate in SARA. The Commission anticipates that institutional participation will increase in the upcoming year. The Commission staff continues to provide support to current South Carolina institutions participating in SARA and remains abreast of current issues about national activities to best support student access to higher education.